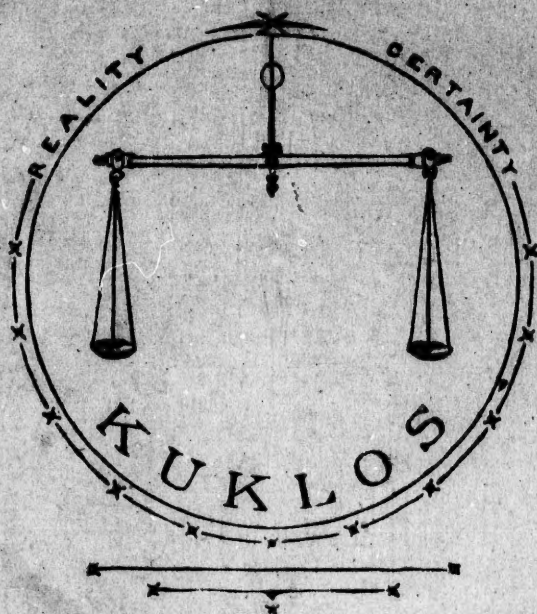


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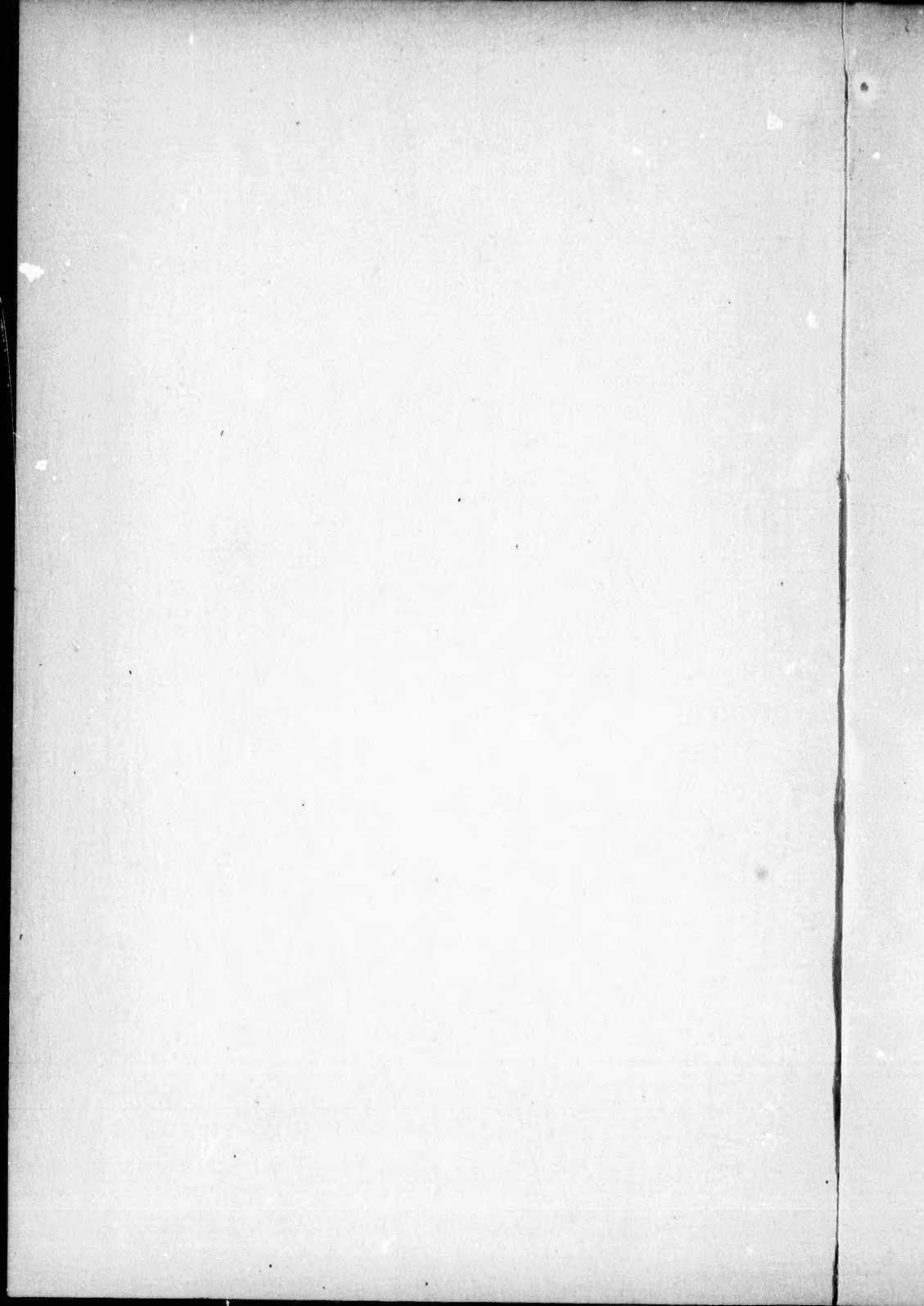
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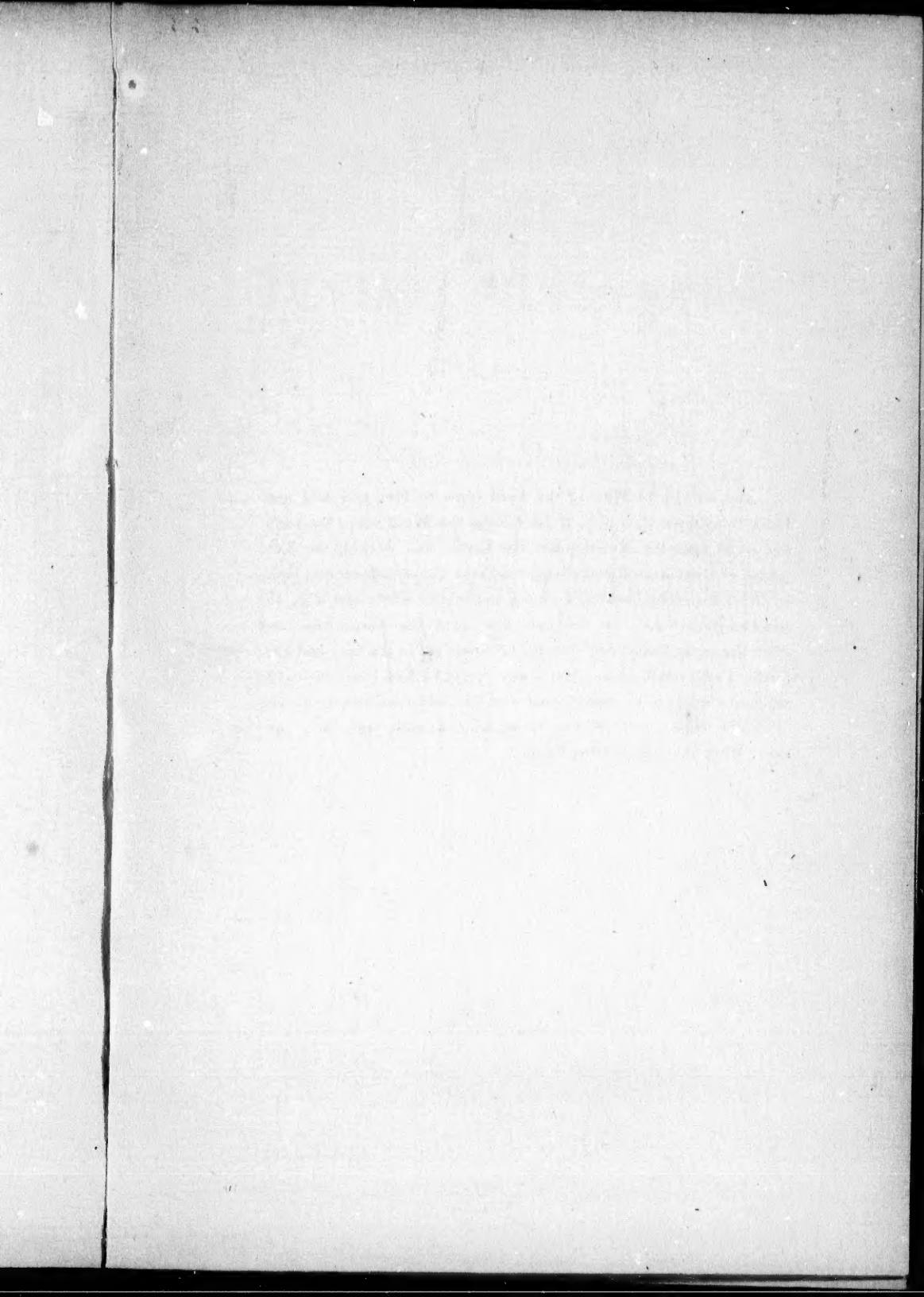
AND

THE NATURAL WORLD



Gloria in Excelsis Deo.





And, behold the Word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him : What doest thou here, Elijah ? And the Word said : Go forth, and stand upon the Mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by : and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks ; but the Lord was not in the wind ; and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake ; and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire ; and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said : What doest thou here, Elijah ?

THE NATURAL WORLD
AND
DIVINE REVELATION.

*Being the Reprint of a Communication
Published in the Montreal Gazette,*

ENTITLED

"New Year's Day and Christmas."

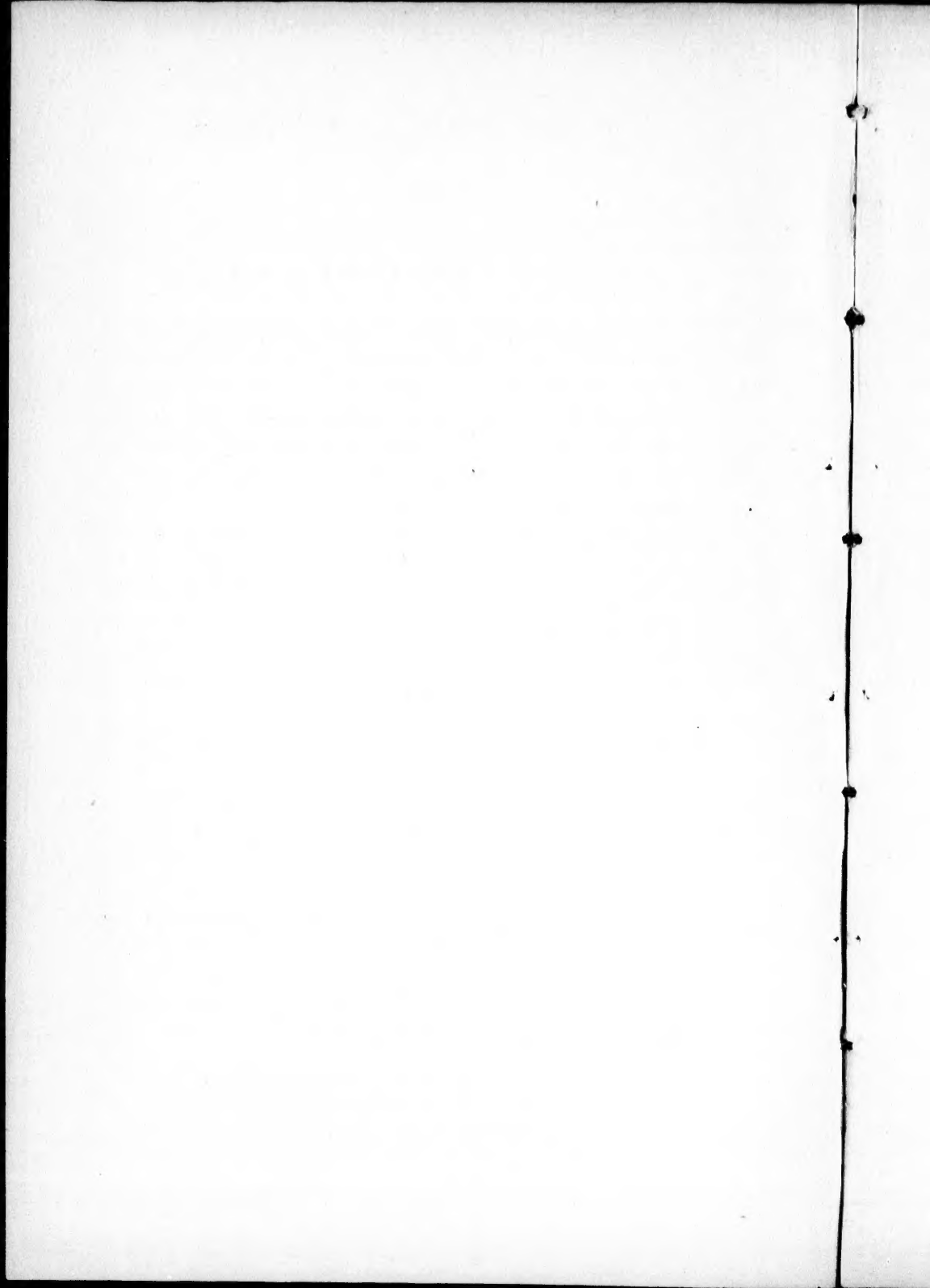
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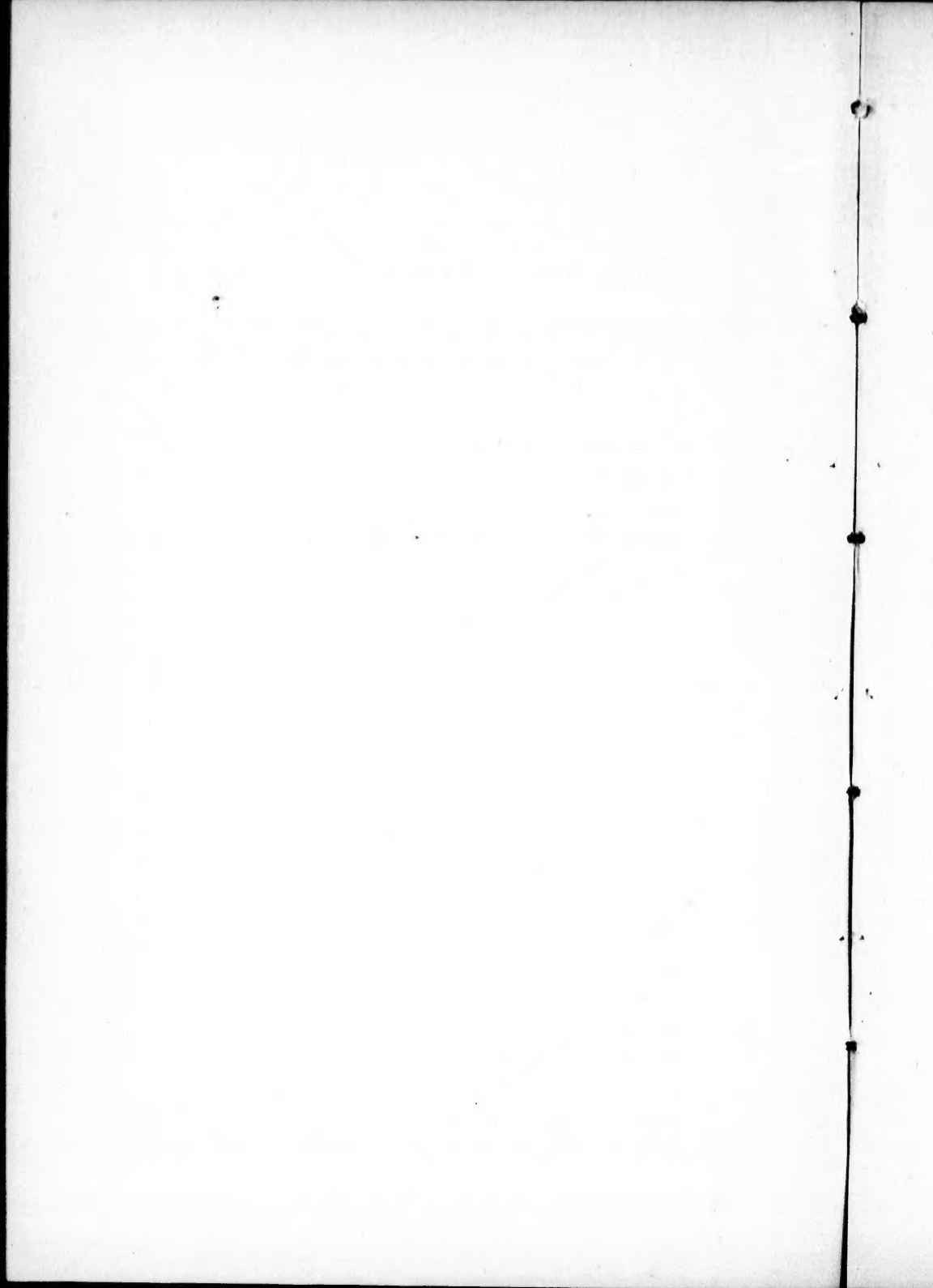
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JANUARY 1st, 1876.



PREFACE.

In reprinting for publication in book-form this letter on the subject of Spiritual Science and Divine Revelation, it may appear that a few remarks are called for in explanation of the course adopted—namely, the publication in the first instance of a communication on so supremely serious and intellectually important a subject in the columns of a daily newspaper. In making these prefatory remarks, however, let us state, at once, that they are simply explanatory. We have not the slightest doubt as to the propriety of the course adopted. The reason for preferring to publish primarily the communication as a letter in a newspaper is already stated in brief at the commencement of the letter itself: it is, Because the communication is of a practical nature and addressed to the general public. But the proceeding is intended to have, and may be understood as having, a further or fuller meaning, which is:—that the new light in which the subject is placed in that communication is not intended exclusively for men who professedly or reputedly are learned scholars, nor exclusively for men of any particular calling or religious profession....It is intended for the general public in the widest and most extended sense. We may add that it will be our earnest and persistent endeavour to make the information contained in it, as readily accessible as possible to the most humble as well as to the most favoured of our brethren.



NEW YEAR'S DAY AND CHRISTMAS.

From the Montreal Gazette.

It may at first sight appear that the subject of this communication is of a more thoughtful and intellectual character than is usually considered fitted for the columns of a daily journal. It will be, however, at once admitted that the subject is of great importance and deep interest to all: to those of all classes who are able to read a newspaper, and even to those who, from lack of the most elementary education, are unable to read. It is because I wish to contend in argument against a very prevalent supposition belonging especially to the practical every-day life of each individual, and which I believe to be an erroneous and highly mischievous prejudice, that I am desirous to make a daily journal the medium of this communication to my fellow-citizens and the public; and therefore request the use of your columns for that purpose.

As the key-note or characteristic definition of my discourse I will first quote the following verses of a Bohemian poet, contemporaneous with our own poet Chaucer; and of which the translation, almost literal, appended to them, may serve to convey the sense to those of your readers

who may be unable to read or interpret the German for themselves :

Die Welt ist wie ein Buch,
 Das von der Hand, von der Allmächtigen,
 Allweisen ist geschrieben;
 Ein jegliches Geschöpf
 Ist wie ein Wort in diesem Buche,
 Das Gottes Macht und Weisheit zeigen soll.
 Da kommt denn, wie es zu geschehen pflegt,
 Der Eine, sieht das Buch und blickt hinein,
 Doch was die Worte, so darin geschrieben,
 Bedeuten, weiß er nicht; ein Zweiter kommt
 Und lobt den Zierrath dieses Buchs, den prächt'gen Band
 Von Pergamen; ein Dritter preist
 Die saubre schöngemalte Schrift:
 Der geist'ge Mensch allein,
 Verstehet den Sinn, der aus den Worten redet.

THOMAS VON STITNY, A.D. 1350.

The world is as a Book,
 Which, by the Hand of the Almighty,
 With Wisdom's Writ is filled.
 Each individual creature
 Stands as a Word therein, and tells
 The power and all-wise skill of God.
 There comes then, as 't may chance, a man
 Who sees the book and looks within,
 But what the words, there written,
 Signify, he knows not. A second comes,
 And lauds the ornate finish of the Book,

The choice, artistic binding.

A third one prizes most

The clear and well-formed type.

The intellectual mind alone

Discerns the Meaning which the Words express.

That supposition to which I am opposing myself, is that we, as human beings, inhabiting the earth and engaged in our various avocations, are now living at the same time, as it were, in two quite different worlds—worlds characteristically different, and which do not harmonize the one with the other. One of them is the material or natural world, the world of sense, in which we see and feel; the practical, every-day world, with its star-spangled firmament or bright sky above us, and the firm earth beneath our feet; the world of sunshine, of rain and snow, of comfort and discomfort, of air to breathe and food to nourish our bodies. To many people—to a great many people—this is *the* world, the actual real world, to which they belong, in which they live, and with the things of which they are directly and immediately concerned. Yes: but, exclusively or not exclusively?...That is *the* question. Many, perhaps, if they speak with openness and sincerity, will say, doubtfully and with hesitation: No, not exclusively...We have a belief in another world; but, to a great extent, it is a vague and unsatisfactory belief; indeed, very much of what we are taught and told about this other world seems to be mysterious and unreal. We have been taught when we were young that there is such another world; our parents have taught us

so, our religious teachers have taught us so, many learned men, whom we much respect, tell us that it is so, and we try to believe it as much as we can; but if it be really true, it is strange that some more satisfactory explanation cannot be given us about it. Men who are able to speak to the point in the most definite and intelligible manner about matters belonging to the actual world in which we live, become mysterious, hazy, and almost, if not quite, unintelligible, so soon as they begin a so-called explanation of things pertaining to the other world.

Now this other world is often called the invisible world; it is sometimes spoken of as the moral world, sometimes as the intellectual world; but, for reasons which we may hereafter state, the more correct and preferable expression, by which to denote it, is the Ideal World. So we admit there is an Ideal and a Natural world, which are different? Certainly. But, then: is not that to admit that there are two distinct worlds? No: because one is a part of the other, and is contained in the other. One room in a house may be distinct from the rest of the house, it may be adapted and used for specific purposes, and the furniture and fittings may differ in character from those of the rest; but it is nevertheless a part of the house in which it is contained. Even so of the Natural World, the world of sense and matter, it is contained in the Ideal World, and is a part of it.

Some people will be apt, perhaps, to receive this statement with the remark, Well, how is

that to help us? The circumstances remain the same. What difference can it make whether we consider there are two distinct worlds, one of them the natural, real world, and the other naturally unreal; or whether we agree with you to consider the Natural, real world, a part of, and included in, the Ideal real world? To this we reply that, if you wish to have an intelligible explanation it makes a very great difference, because the one is an incorrect, and the other is the correct way of considering the subject; and to understand a complex difficult subject it is essential to comprehend correctly the fundamental relations of that subject.

To give a practical illustration and application of these remarks, let us consider the relations of New Year's Day and Christmas Day, as belonging the one to the Natural World and the other to the Ideal World. We should not be greatly surprised to learn that to many, even educated persons, this distinction presents itself as a fanciful freak of the imagination, or, otherwise, that they receive it as a strange novelty. Yet if this be so, it makes the more clearly apparent to us that the time has come when an explanation, as definite and intelligible as it can be rendered, should be given to the educated public on the relation of the ideal to the natural world.

We have first to consider *New Year's Day*... (a) as belonging immediately to the natural world, and (b) as belonging typically to the ideal world.

(a) New Year's Day, to the practical-sense man of every-day life, signifies the conclusion of a

certain definite period of time and the commencement of another certain definite period ; it signifies one long day come to a close, and another long day about to commence. Busy men take, as it were, a little time to breathe, to reckon up the losses and gains of the past day's (year's) work, and, if they be good men and true, to exchange words of sympathy and encouragement with their fellows, before entering on the business of another long day. But the gains and losses are such in the natural sense only ; the acquisition or loss of substantial possessions ; the advancement of social position since the commencement of the past year : so many rounds higher up the ladder towards the coveted position and fame. And the *per contra*, so much more of life expended and gone, so much less remaining ; old age with all its disagreeable accompaniments so much nearer ; prospective death coming nearer and growing more distinct ; the memory of the mistakes made and the follies committed (in the natural business sense only) ; the increase in responsibilities and anxieties (in the same sense).

(b). To appreciate the Ideal significance of New Year's Day, even in the more restricted sense of that significance, it is necessary first of all, to apprehend the ideal meaning and purpose of the natural life of the human being—the relation of ourselves, as human beings, in the more extended (ideal) sense, to the circumstances and conditions by which we are surrounded. So soon as we apprehend that meaning and purpose to be educational—that we are here to learn ;

that we live here to learn how to live; to undergo a training process; to be trained and to train ourselves. So soon as we distinctly apprehend this, the ideal sense of New Year's Day begins to appear and to be felt. If education, increased knowledge of ourselves, of our weakness and ignorance, of the means of acquiring increased strength, of the conditions of our intellectual development, the acquisition of a more perfect control over our passions and perverse inclinations, if these constitute the especial purpose of our human lives, then what progress have we made in that definite period of time which has just elapsed? It is a considerable fraction of our present life which has gone; how large a fraction it may be, we do not know. What have we to show for it, in distinct and clearly defined progress? If we be quite sure that some real progress has been made, however little, then surely the time will not have been entirely lost.

But when this apprehension is distinctly and firmly acquired, a new set of ideas begins to crowd into the minds, perhaps, of many of us. We have had, perhaps, a distinct and grateful belief in God as the Creator of the natural world; as the God who has made all things belonging to the wonderfully complex natural world perfectly harmonious with each other, and each complete and perfect in itself; who has appointed such admirably adapted laws to govern and control each and all of the various parts that certainty and regularity in the continued working of the vast and complex

machine is assured ; as the God of order and law ; the God of marvellous mechanical knowledge and skill. And we have had also, perhaps, a so-called belief in the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible ; and have assented, it may be, to the assurance that God, the Creator of the natural world, and the God of the Bible, is one and the same. But we have had at the same time, perhaps, a misgiving that we were somewhere astray. The two revelations of God, or the two phases of God's manifestation of Himself, in the works of creation and orderly government of the natural world, on the one hand, and in the Bible, on the other, do not appear to us, perhaps, to harmonize. From the very commencement of the Bible, as it is read to us, we are met by difficulties ; we are met by statements which reverence for the book as a work claiming to be authorized by God, prevents us from terming extravagant and mythical. We are told to believe them to be literally true in the ordinary natural sense of the words. But we then remember that we can only believe in God as primarily and above all things the God of our reason ; as He who has bestowed upon us reason as our guide and counsellor ; we reflect that we cannot receive the Bible (or any other intellectual communication) except through and by aid of our reason, and many of those statements which we are told to accept literally and naturally, are, in that sense, manifestly unreasonable.

At last we have fallen back on faith, we have perhaps, succeeded in satisfying our minds with

the conviction that the Bible contains the word of God, and that what we have not been able to understand will be hereafter made intelligible.

But now, having acquired the apprehension of the natural human life, in its relation to the ideal world, as having an educational purpose as its especial characteristic, we find we have thereby acquired a new point of view from which to survey and consider the relations of God's revelation of Himself in the Bible, to the circumstances and conditions of our natural life. For if education be the main and especial purpose of our human lives, then, what characteristic purpose is the Bible, as a revelation addressed to human beings, likely to have? This: To explain the manner in which the training or educational progress is to be conducted: to point out the difficulties and direct us in following the proper course; to encourage and assure us of spiritual assistance in the endeavour to follow the right course; to caution us as to the danger of wasting our lives or misapplying them to base purposes. It at once suggests itself as extremely probable that the Book will be found to possess the characteristics of a highly intellectual work: a book expressly addressed to the educated intellect of intelligent beings.

Let us in this light—that is, not in a spirit of critical doubt, but in a spirit of reverential belief in it, as a work of supreme Wisdom, open the book again at the commencement, and (for the present very briefly) consider the general character and apparent purpose of the first chapters.

What is it those primary chapters, with their

internal evidences of superhuman origin ; with their perfection of literary art in the wonderful completeness and brevity with which the historical information is placed before the reader ? What is it those carefully elaborated chapters have for their great and specific purpose ?.....

What is the immediately apparent characteristic in them ? We are informed of the creation of the world and of the creation of man. Yes : but if the object of those primary chapters had been simply to communicate authoritatively those facts, surely a very few lines would have sufficed for such purpose. We have actually a condensed history of a progressive creation presented to us. We come to the creation of man, and observe that in this case the information is not confined to the mere fact of man's creation. We are told that God, having formed man, a direct and particular communication of life from God takes place ; and we are told expressly that God made man in His own image. To appreciate the supreme importance of the fact herein communicated, we must have distinctly in mind the general purpose of a divine revelation, namely, to satisfy the intellectual craving of the intelligent human creature for information, otherwise unattainable, as to his origin, as to his relation to his Maker, as to the relation of the intellectual conditions of his restricted and abstract existence to the intellectual conditions of the absolute. If, at the present time, with the now existing state of human knowledge, we were without the Biblical revelation, and, having assumed the creation of man by

God, we were to appoint a committee of the most learned men to compress into one question the information which intellectual humanity was most earnestly desirous to obtain from God, we do not suppose any form of words could be devised to convey the question more definitely, concisely and satisfactorily than the same sentence put interrogatively, namely: Did God create man in His own image? It is well known that not a few men, greatly learned, who have chosen to condemn, reject, and ignore this communication of the fact at the commencement of the Bible, have utterly lost and confounded themselves in the vain endeavour to determine and solve this question by their own unaided efforts.

Appreciating, therefore, in some degree, the importance of the information here presented to us, we observe that it is not communicated as though the Author of the communication considered it merely as an item in a general communication, which might peradventure have some degree of interest for the intelligent beings to whom the communication is addressed, but particular attention is called to it; it is made as emphatic as words can make it and strengthened by a verbal variation in the form of the statement; it is repeated and then reiterated. Evidently, the importance of information thus placed almost at the commencement of the Bible, is recognized by the Author of the Bible. Shall we not, then, do well to consider and examine whether this be not the primary fundamental fact—the foundation stone, as it were, upon which the superstructure of divine revelation is built?

Let us put the fact herein made known to us—namely, that God is Himself the Ideal and Absolute of man's intellectual existence—as primary, and, in this relation, take a general survey of the opening chapter. In what capacity are we first introduced to our Supreme All-wise Ideal? In the capacity of a worker—as engaged in a vast undertaking involving much and persistent labour. In what manner does he work? (Will the record give us that information?) Systematically; evidently, *on* and *to* a plan. The work is divided into sections, and proceeded with orderly: each section when completed is subjected to revision. We are not told whether destruction and re-creation in any case took place in order that the perfection and harmony of all the parts should be rendered complete, but we are distinctly and particularly told that each section was revised in detail, and that the whole was subjected to revision as a whole; the vast complex plan of creation, with all its divisions and parts fulfilled, is finally revised as a completed work.

The particular subject on which we are now writing is the relation between New Year's day and Christmas day as marking the educational progress of the individual man and the educational progress of the human race respectively, towards a more perfect knowledge of their Great Ideal. Let us now consider briefly, in its higher signification (that is, in its ideal signification), that event the anniversary of which we have recently been engaged in the celebration, namely, the birth of Christianity. With the historical nar-

rative of the events which at that period came to pass in the natural world, as recorded in the Bible, we may suppose the reader to be familiar. The initial or primary event was a birth. A birth heralded by a declaration from heaven that it was fraught with blessings to mankind, and accompanied and followed by miraculous signs of divine interposition in human affairs, and of superhuman spiritual influence over the events and circumstances of the natural world. We who, living in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-five, have been educated in a Christian land, and enjoy the benefits and blessings of Christian civilization... We shall not be apt to think that the angelic heralds too highly estimated and extolled the importance to mankind of that event. The event was a birth. The immediate event manifested in the natural world was the birth of a human child. But what was the portentous ideal birth which was signified by and manifested in the birth of the human child? We are told by the authorized teachers that an incarnation of the Deity took place; that God manifested Himself in the natural world through the form and body of a man. Of the truth of that doctrine we have no doubt whatever. That it is strictly true in the highest sense we do not doubt; but that highest sense is the ideal sense, which is higher, fuller, and greater than the natural sense; the natural sense being related to the ideal sense, somewhat after the same sort that the shadow is related to the substance. It has unquestionably been of great advantage to num-

berless individuals, and to the human race collectively, to believe that ideal truth, through faith.... That is, to believe it through confidence and trustfulness in the primary source of the doctrine. It has been of great advantage thus to believe without understanding it; and to believe, even, although in a wrong or incorrect sense. But, surely: if education has now so far advanced as to enable us to do so, it must be better to directly believe the truth itself in the right sense, with understanding.

Let us here endeavour to briefly indicate the reasoning—that is, the mode of considering and arranging the facts—by which an understanding of the actual meaning of the great fundamental truth of Christianity may be arrived at. ‘The birth of Christ.’ ‘The incarnation of the Son of God.’ ‘The Son of Man.’ ‘The Word of God in the world.’ Each of the principal words in each of these sentences has its ideal sense and significance which must be, at least in some degree, apprehended before the general ideal truth can be understood. Let us, first of all, realize as distinctly as we can that we are spiritual beings. *That* is our relation to the ideal world.* In our animal nature, as merely animals, our relation would be that of creeping things, and, as such we can scarcely be said to have any place in the ideal world, other than that of a vitalized form of matter. A *man* may therefore be *ideally* defined as the spiritual or intellectual organization

* It should be particularly observed, however, that we have, each of us, to make good our claim to such relationship.

which dwells within and actuates the so-called human being. Now, let us consider the ideal meaning of the word *birth*. 'A man is born into the world.' That is, a spiritual organization endowed with life by God, is introduced into the natural world. The spiritual being becomes adapted to the restricted, and in the ideal sense, artificial conditions of the natural world. The intellectual being becomes related in a particular manner to the material conditions and existences of the natural world.

That God is Himself a spirit (or, as we would prefer to say, is spiritual.)* We already know from the emphatic declaration of the Bible. A *word* in the natural world is the expression of a spiritual-being in or through the medium of matter, so as to become communicable to human beings through their material organs of sense. The 'Word of God in the world' may be therefore understood as meaning the expression of God's personal attributes, of His will, His power, His love for His terrestrial children, in the natural world through the medium of matter; but also through the medium of the intellectual organization of an individual man, or of a community of men collectively, because the relation of the intellectual or spiritual being to the Creator is similar to the relation of mere matter to the (created) spiritual being.

The *ideal* meaning of the expression 'Christ' we have already explained and defined elsewhere

* The great all-pervading Spirit. The Father of Spirits.

as 'the truth of God.' Jesus Christ *ideally* means the truth of God, manifested in the natural world, primarily through the person and human nature of the man Jesus of Nazareth.

The Son of Man (as applied to Jesus Christ) means the spiritual ideal of a perfect man, conceived by the imperfectly educated and limited faculties of man.

The Son of God (as applied to Jesus Christ) means the spiritual ideal of a perfect man, conceived by the Wisdom of God.

A Virgin *ideally* means a mind which has not allied itself to any intellectual inventions (unsound doctrines or theories) of human origin, but is pure in its allegiance to the Wisdom of God, ready in its acceptance of the Love of God, and devoted in its submission to the Will of God.

We may now reply to the question : What was the birth, *i.e.*, the real nature, in the higher sense, of the birth, which we celebrate on Christmas Day ? It was the birth or introduction into the natural world of sound Spiritual Science. This began to be manifested through the divinely instructed human person and by means of the inspired teaching of Jesus. At his death it appeared to his followers to have been overcome and destroyed by the powers opposed to it ; at his resurrection it was again recognized as divine and indestructible. But the early Christians, from lack of education, being unable to directly receive the ideal truth, naturalized it (so to speak) into the individual personality of Jesus. There is abundant assurance in the Bible, how-

ever, that so long as education had not sufficiently advanced for the pure truth to be directly cognized and received, God would accept the reception of the truth in the indirect and mystical sense which is expressed by belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. That is, belief in the perfect human ideal of God, or, as it may be expressed, belief in the attributes of God and characteristics of His nature, as manifested and made known to men through the person, the doctrine and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are now able to discern more clearly the relation of New Year's Day and Christmas, because the latter commemorates the completion of one great epoch and the commencement of another great epoch in the intellectual progress of the human race. The day of its annual celebration may be justly considered, if it be rightly observed, as the intellectual or spiritual New Year's Day.

Let us remember when, at the end of the expired year, we examine and take stock of our progress, when we reckon up our most signal failures, and renew our resolutions to put more care, earnestness and energy into our work, that we are not alone; however solitary and secluded we may be in a human sense. But that we have One with us who can sympathise with our disappointments in failure; who will support our resolutions if they be faithful and true, and who will bless our endeavours if they be earnest and persistent. And let us not forget that our Great Ideal has first revealed Himself to us as engaged in the vast work of creation; that we are to take His manner

of work for our example ; to consider. to revise, and to persistently endeavour to bring to complete perfection. By so doing, whether we be an individual, a community, or a mighty nation, we may be sure that the Great Educator will Himself take a pride in our progress, will encourage and assist our efforts, and bless our endeavours. But we are not to work as mere machines for the accumulation of wealth, and are not to make a god of our work, of our employment, whatever it may be ; nor to forget Him to whom we rightfully belong. In return for all His benefits and blessings the Creator claims our constant regard, our love and our reliance on His counsel, as our Friend and Guardian. Surely the claim is not unreasonable, nor are the conditions hard.

C.B.
